

FOREST ADMINISTRATION REPORT

OF THE

NORTHERN CIRCLE, BOMBAY PRESIDENCY,

FOR THE OFFICIAL YEAR 1892-93.

INTRODUCTION.

This is the first Annual Report submitted for the new Northern Circle, and a few statistics and general observations will not, on this occasion, be out of place in the introductory chapter.

2. The Bombay Presidency proper was for forest administrative purposes divided into three Circles, corresponding with the three Revenue Divisions, during the year, and the additional Circle thus formed was placed in independent charge of a Deputy Conservator. A permanent distribution of Imperial and Provincial officers and of establishments between the three Circles has not been made yet, and the distribution of officers and subordinates which existed at the time of the separation of the Circles continues, with the exception of an establishment of three clerks and two peons belonging to the old Northern Circle being seconded for duty in the new Circle.

3. The Northern Circle is formed of the three districts of Panch Maháls, Surat and Thána. The first two are in Gujarát and the last in the Konkan. The forests of the Dángs, which for political purposes are under the Central Division, continue to be administered through the Divisional Forest Officer, Surat. With this exception the forest divisional charges coincide with the fiscal divisions; the Thána forests, however, being under the management and control of two Divisional Officers.

4. The total area of country in which the forests are situated is 7,870 square miles. The population according to the last census returns is 1,901,194 souls, showing an average of 241.57 per square mile. Excluding places with a population of less than 4,000 souls each, there are 17 towns distributed thus among the forest divisions:—

Division.	No.	Name of Town.	Population according to Census of 1891.
East and West Thána .	1	Bándra	18,317
	2	Thána	17,455
	3	Bhiwndi	14,387
	4	Kalyán	12,608
	5	Kurla	11,469
	6	Bassein	11,291
	7	Agáshi	7,538
	8	Máhim	6,960
Total ...			100,025
Surat	1	Surat	109,229
	2	Bulsár	14,779
	3	Ránder	10,926
	4	Párdi	4,686
	5	Bárdoli	4,278
	6	Chikhli	4,041
Total ...			147,939
Panch Maháls... ..	1	Godhra	14,691
	2	Dohad	12,935
	3	Jhálod	5,991
	4	Kálol	4,464
Total ...			38,081

5. The forest area administered in the Northern Circle measures approximately 2,233 square miles. This represents 28·37 per cent. of the total area of the districts in which it is situated and a little over three quarters of an acre per head of population. There is, in addition, a wide area of forest land held by the Gáikwár of Baroda, the Portuguese Government, the Rájás of Dharampor, Bánsda and Jawhár, and the Rewa Kántha and Rájpipla Chiefs, who are commencing to recognize the importance of forest conservancy, and a few of them are endeavouring to work their forests systematically.

6. The manner in which forests in foreign territory are mixed up with Government forests render the management of the latter at times difficult, but it does not interfere with the sale of their products to the extent, one would suppose, owing to the facilities offered for export to the Bombay and other markets.

7. The area of reserved forests was increased by 14,124 acres by settlement and decreased by 368 acres. It is hoped that, as a good start has now been made, the forest settlement and demarcation work remaining to be done will be completed in a year or two.

8. The Forest Survey Party has continued its operations in the two Thána divisions, and considerable progress has been made in triangulation, traverse and topographical surveys in the divisions concerned.

9. The operations of the Working Plans Branch were again confined to the Thána District, and much useful work has been accomplished.

10. In the matter of concessions, an important Government Resolution was issued during the year on the subject of trees in occupied lands in the Thána and Kolába districts surrendering the rights of Government, purely as an act of grace, over all forest produce outside forest limits, with the exception of teak (*Tectona grandis*), sissum (*Dalbergia latifolia*) and sandalwood (*Santalum album*), growing in occupied uplands, and of tiwas (*Ougeinia dalbergioides*) in lands under the Kolvan Settlement in addition to the above.

11. The forests of the Dángs were further opened out by transport roads at a cost of Rs. 403-13-10, and another rest-house for the use of officers was under course of construction during the year.

12. Crime, as represented by forest offences taken into Court and compounded by Forest officers under Section 67 of the Forest Act, was less. But the percentage of acquittals in the former class of cases increased from 16·03 in the year before to 26·5 during the year of this report. The number of cases compounded was 419 against 502 in the year 1891-92, and the compensation accepted for damage amounted to Rs. 1,025-3-1.

13. Forest fires both in number and extent show a progressive improvement, except in certain localities in Thána and Surat divisions, where the forests greatly suffered from fire.

14. The grazing revenue continues to be exceedingly low owing to the extent to which free grazing is allowed. But receipts from grass have considerably improved in the West Thána Division. The number of cattle impounded during the year was in excess of the past year, being 6,277 against 4,656.

15. The reproduction of the forests, both natural and artificial, was fairly satisfactory, the rainfall though late having been plentiful.

16. The financial prosperity of the divisions comprised in this Circle has been maintained. The year's gross receipts were greater than in the year previous by Rs. 21,132; but as the expenditure was more by a sum of Rs. 26,192, owing chiefly to the acquisition of land on the Tánsa catchment area by payment of money compensation, the net surplus was less by Rs. 4,960.

17. Timber operations contributed Rs. 5,31,209 towards the receipts of the Circle, and other sources of revenue Rs. 1,04,240